

A Study of Small-scale Landslides Susceptibility **Hybrid Static-Dynamic** Assessment in **South China**: Merging SBAS-InSAR and Machine Learning

Zhu liang^{1,2,3}, Jingxin Hou^{1,2,3}, Yang Liu^{1,2,3,*}, Ting Wang⁴, Guochao Liu^{1,2,3}, Chunshuai Si^{1,2,3} and Jun Wu^{1,2,3}

¹Guangzhou Urban Planning & Design Survey Research Institute Co., Ltd, Guangzhou, 510060, China

²Collaborative Innovation Center for Natural Resources Planning and Marine Technology of Guangzhou, Guangzhou, 510060, China

³Guangdong Enterprise Key Laboratory for Urban Sensing, Monitoring and Early Warning, Guangzhou, 510060, China

⁴Guangzhou Meteorological Observatory, Guangzhou, 511430

* Correspondence: liuyang@gzpi.com.cn

Abstract. Shallow landslides, triggered by factors such as heavy rainfall and human engineering activities, are characterized by their sudden occurrence, wide distribution, and small scale, which pose significant threats to human life, especially in southern China. Landslide susceptibility assessment (LSA) is crucial for disaster prevention, mitigation, and land-use planning. Traditional assessment methods, such as field surveys and statistical models, predominantly depend on static geological environment factors, which exhibit inherent limitations in capturing spatiotemporal information on dynamic surface deformation. This deficiency directly leads to a lack of timeliness in hazard assessment, which is particularly important for sudden disasters. In this study, small Baseline Subset (SBAS - InSAR) and machine learning were married to explore a hybrid static-dynamic method in LSA, and the Conghua district in Guangzhou was selected as the study area. **First, a dataset was prepared for the study area, which included 368 historical landslide samples, 368 non-landslide samples, 9 static factors, and 2 dynamic factors interpreted by SBAS - InSAR. Then, the preprocessed factors and sample data were employed to establish three machine learning models, namely Random Forest (RF), Light Gradient Boosting Machine (LightGBM), and Extreme Gradient Boosting (XGBoost). Finally, the performance of these three models was validated using 5-fold cross-validation, with the Area Under the Curve (AUC) as the core evaluation index, and their performance was further compared with that of the models built using only the 9 static factors.** The results show that the SAR-XGBoost model exhibits the best performance, with an AUC of 0.944, and the models considered dynamic factors all performed better than that of static factors only. This study demonstrates that merging SBAS-InSAR and machine learning can provide a reliable technical approach for assessment of small-scale LSA, which is of great significance for targeted disaster prevention and mitigation in rural and hilly areas of South China.

Keywords: Landslide susceptibility map; Small-scale; SBAS – InSAR; Machine learning; Static-Dynamic evaluation

1. Introduction

Small-scale shallow landslides are a common type of geological disaster, usually occurring in the upper soil layer or weathered rock layer (Ado et al.,2022; Castelli et al.,2025; Sun et al.,2025). Under the combined influence of natural

38 factors (e.g., extreme rainfall, geological weathering) and human activities (e.g., rural road construction, farmland
39 expansion), small-scale landslides have become one of the most frequent geological disasters in southern China
40 (Zhang et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2021). Unlike large-scale landslides, small-scale landslides have small volumes
41 (usually 10 - 1000 m³) and shallow sliding depths (1 - 3 m), but they are widely distributed, highly sudden, and
42 difficult to monitor (Cui et al.,2023). In recent years, under the influence of global climate change, extreme rainfall
43 events have occurred frequently, and the intensity and frequency of shallow landslides have increased significantly.
44 With the rapid development of urbanization and infrastructure construction, human engineering activities further
45 increase the risk of shallow landslides (Liu et al.,2026).

46 Traditional LSA methods mainly include field survey methods, remote sensing image interpretation methods,
47 and statistical model methods. Field survey methods are time-consuming, labor-intensive, and have limited spatial
48 coverage, making it difficult to carry out large-area assessments (Kovács et al.,2019). Statistical model methods,
49 such as the Logistic Regression model, clustering analysis, require a large number of historical landslide data and
50 cannot handle the nonlinear relationship between factors (Huang et al.,2024; Nwazelibe et al.,2024). In recent years,
51 machine learning methods have been widely used in LSA due to their strong ability to handle nonlinear and high-
52 dimensional data (Huang et al.,2024; Zhou et al.,2025). However, most of these studies use static influencing factors
53 (e.g., lithology, slope, aspect) and ignore the dynamic changes in slope stability, such as subtle surface
54 deformation before landslide initiation. Landslides often occur after a period of accelerated surface deformation
55 (e.g., deformation rate increases from -5 mm/year to -15 mm/year within 1 - 2 months before sliding), which is a
56 key precursor of landslide occurrence (Deng, et al.,2024; Wang et al.,2024).

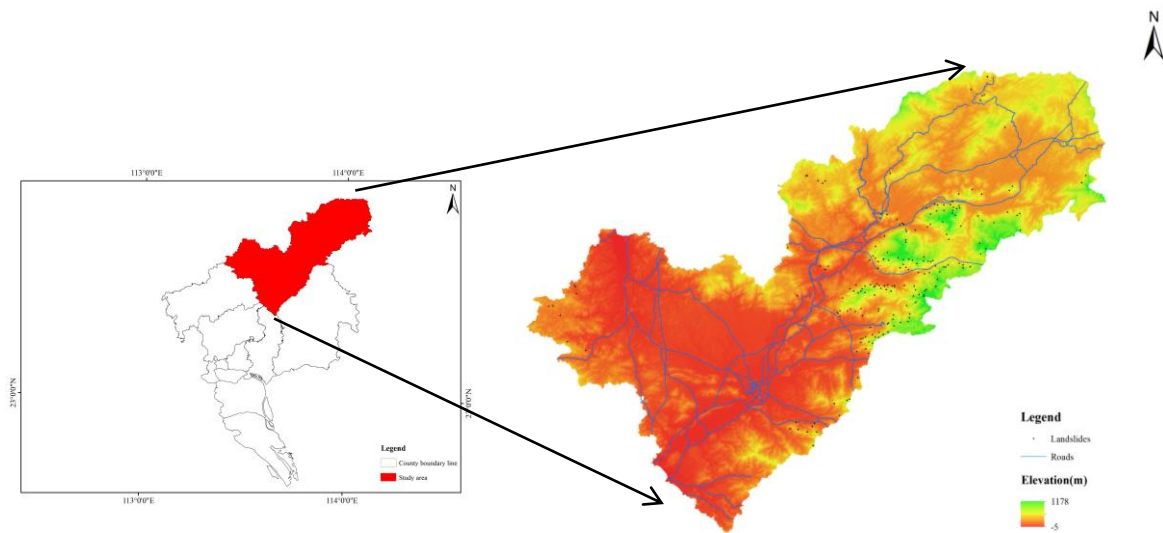
57 Traditional remote sensing methods (e.g., optical remote sensing) can only identify existing landslides but
58 cannot capture subtle surface deformation. Field monitoring methods (e.g., inclinometers, GNSS) can measure
59 surface deformation with high accuracy, but they are limited by high cost and low spatial coverage, making it
60 difficult to apply in large - area small - scale landslide assessment (Ebrahim et al.,2024; Nie et al.,2025; Wang et
61 al.,2024). Therefore, the lack of dynamic deformation information is the main bottleneck restricting the accuracy
62 of small-scale landslide susceptibility assessment. SBAS-InSAR exploits distributed scatterers (DS), which
63 can retain coherence in areas with sparse vegetation or bare soil through the use of small baseline
64 interferometric pairs. Unlike permanent scatterers (PS) that require stable point-like targets (e.g., buildings,
65 rock outcrops), DS-based methods utilize the statistical properties of neighboring pixels with similar scattering
66 characteristics. In our study area, where over 60% of the land is covered by subtropical forests, DS-based
67 approaches provide complementary coverage to PS-based methods, particularly in non-urban regions. However,
68 it should be noted that InSAR coherence in vegetated areas is influenced by multiple factors including vegetation
69 type, density, height, seasonal variation, and SAR wavelength (Hussain et al.,2025; Zhang et al.,2025; Guo et
70 al.,2024).

71 The study is to explore and compare the performance of merging SBAS-InSAR technology with different
72 machine learning models (RF, LightGBM, and XGBoost) in the static-dynamic assessment of small-scale
73 landslide susceptibility. Conghua Dissect, Guangzhou, was selected as the study area.

74 2. Study Area and Data Sources

75 2.1 Overview of the Study Area

76 The study area is located in the mountainous area of Guangdong Province, China, with a geographical coordinate
77 range of 109°20' - 110°00'E and 28°10' - 28°50'N, covering an area of approximately 2,500 km²(Fig.1). The study
78 area has a subtropical monsoon climate, with an average annual rainfall of 1,200 - 1,600 mm, and the rainfall is
79 mainly concentrated in the flood season (May - September), accounting for more than 70% of the annual rainfall.
80 The terrain in the study area is complex and undulating, with an elevation range of 200 - 1,800 m. The main
81 landforms are mountains, hills, and valleys. The stratum in the study area is mainly composed of Devonian
82 sandstone, shale, Carboniferous limestone, and Quaternary loose deposits. The geological structure is relatively
83 complex, with faults and folds developed. The study area is an area with frequent shallow landslide disasters
84 (Chen et al., 2025). In recent years, many shallow landslides have occurred, mainly triggered by **short-term heavy**
85 **rainfall, prolonged drizzle, house and road construction**. The number of landslides recorded in the study area is
86 368, with the volume ranging from 15 m³ to 400 m³ and the area ranging from 4 m³ to 100 m³(Fig.2). These
87 landslides have caused serious damage to local infrastructure and people's lives and property, so it is urgent to
88 carry out a shallow landslide susceptibility assessment in this area.



89
90 **Figure 1: Location of the study area showing elevation and landslide samples.**



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93 **Figure 2: Photos of the on-site investigation of shallow landslides.**

94 **2.2 Data Sources and Preprocessing**

95 **2.2.1 Sentinel - 1A/B SAR Data**

96 The SAR data used in this study are Sentinel - 1A/B C - band SAR images provided by the European Space
97 Agency (ESA). The data acquisition period is from January 2024 to December 2025, with a total of 48 images.
98 The imaging mode is Interferometric Wide (IW) mode, with a spatial resolution of 5 m (azimuth) \times 20 m (range)
99 and a temporal baseline of 12 days. The main parameters of the Sentinel - 1A/B SAR data are shown in Table 1.

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105 **Table 1. Main Parameters of Sentinel - 1A/B SAR Data**

Parameter	Value
Satellite	Sentinel - 1A/B
Sensor Band	C - band (5.405 GHz)
Imaging Mode	IW
Spatial Resolution	Azimuth: 5 m; Range: 20 m
Swath Width	250 km
Temporal Baseline	12 days
Polarization	VV + VH
Acquisition Period	January 2024- December 2025
Number of Images	48
Orbit	Ascending

106 The preprocessing of Sentinel - 1A/B SAR data is carried out using the Sentinel Application Platform (SNAP)
 107 software.

108 **2.2.2 Digital Elevation Model (DEM) Data**

109 The DEM data used in this study were collected and interpreted independently by the research institution. with a
 110 spatial resolution of 10 m. The DEM data are mainly used for geometric correction of SAR images, generation of
 111 topographic phase in interferograms, and extraction of topographic factors (slope, aspect, elevation, curvature) for
 112 shallow landslide susceptibility assessment.

113 **2.2.3 Geological Data**

114 The geological data used in this study include the 1:50,000 geological map of the study area and the lithology and
 115 geological structure reports provided by the local geological survey department. The lithology data are classified
 116 into five categories: sandstone, shale, limestone, Quaternary loose deposits, and others. The geological structure
 117 data mainly include the distribution of faults and folds. These geological data are digitized using ArcGIS software
 118 to form vector data, which are used as important evaluation indices for shallow landslide susceptibility assessment.

119 **2.2.4 Hydrological Data**

120 The hydrological data used in this study include the river distribution data. The river distribution data are obtained
 121 from the 1:100,000 topographic map, and the distance from each mapping unit to the nearest river is calculated

122 using ArcGIS software. These hydrological data are used to reflect the influence of rainfall and surface water on
 123 shallow landslide occurrence.

124 **2.2.5 Human Activity Data**

125 The human activity data used in this study include the road distribution data. The road distribution data are
 126 obtained from the 1:100,000 topographic map, and the distance from each mapping unit to the nearest road is
 127 calculated using ArcGIS software. These human activity data are used to reflect the influence of human
 128 engineering activities on shallow landslide occurrence.

129 **2.2.6 Normalized Differential Vegetation Index (NDVI)**

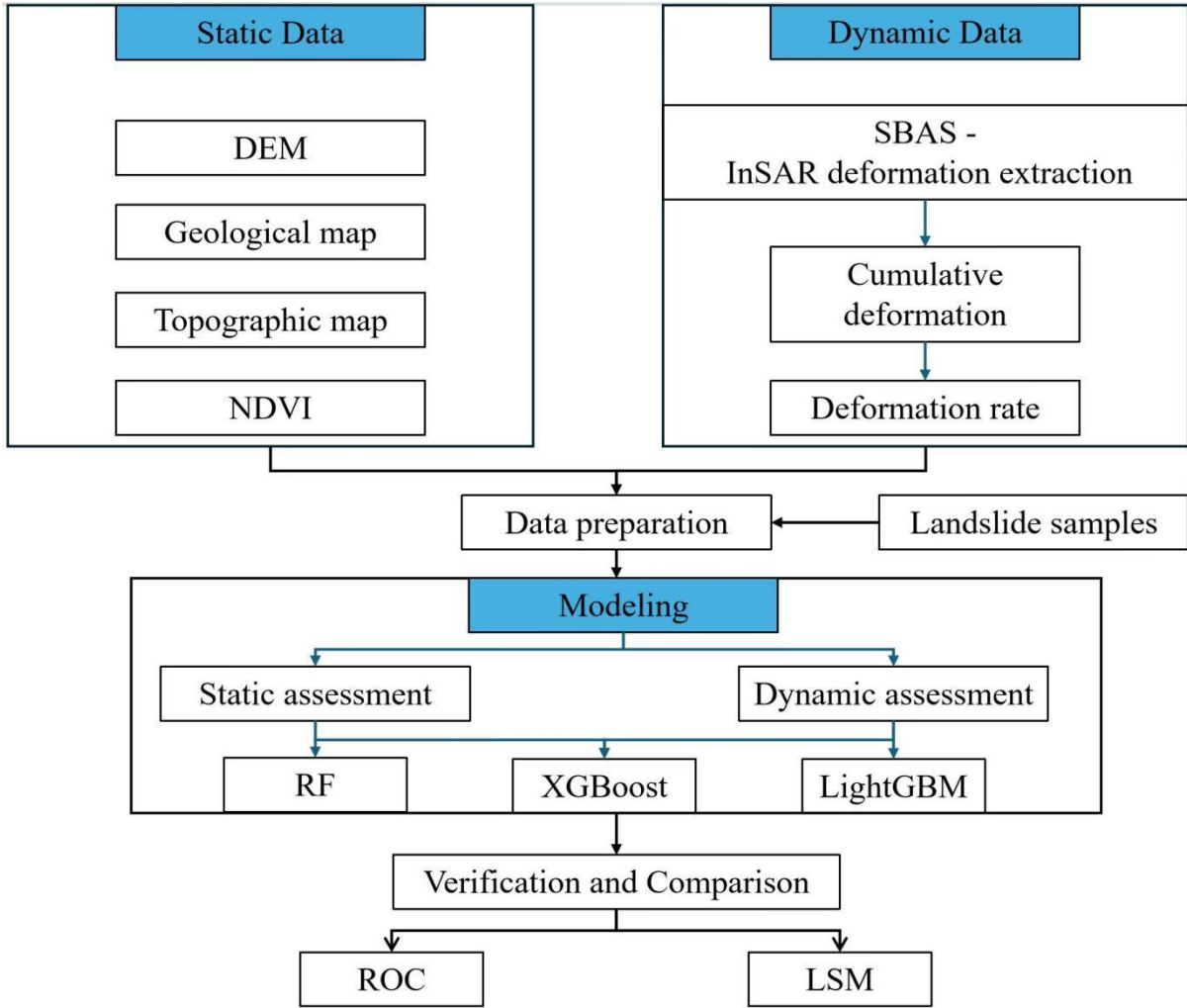
130 The vegetation coverage used in this study includes NDVI, which was obtained from the MODIS satellite images
 131 provided by NASA.

132 **Table 2. Summary of data information and functions**

Items	Scale	Function	Source
Sentinel - 1A/B	5 m× 20 m	Extracting surface	European Space
SAR Data		deformation	Agency (ESA)
DEM	10 m× 10 m	Extraction of	Interpreted
		topographic factors	independently
Geological map	1:50,000	Extraction of	Geological Survey
		lithology and faults	Department
Topographic map	1:100,000	Extraction of river	Geological Survey
		and road distribution	Department
NDVI		Reflecting	NASA
		Vegetation coverage	
Landslide samples	15 m ³ to 400 m ³	Model training and	Survey reports, field
		validation	surveys, and remote
			sensing image
			interpretation
Non-landslide			

133 **3. Methods**

134 The research framework of this study is shown in Fig.3, which mainly includes 4 parts: SBAS - InSAR surface
 135 deformation extraction, data preparation, machine learning modeling, verification, and comparison.



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137 **Figure 3: Workflow of the study.**

138 **3.1 SBAS - InSAR Method for Surface Deformation Extraction**

139 The Small Baseline Subset (SBAS - InSAR) method is a Time-Series InSAR technique proposed by Berardino et
 140 al. (2002). This method selects SAR image pairs characterized by small spatial and temporal baselines, so as to
 141 form interferometric pairs. This approach can effectively mitigate the effects of temporal and spatial decorrelation
 142 as well as atmospheric delay, thereby enhancing the accuracy of surface deformation measurement:

143
$$\frac{N+1}{2} \leq M \leq \frac{N(N+1)}{2} \quad (1)$$

144 Where N is SAR images, M is interferograms.

145 Taking t_0 as the reference moment, $\varphi(t_i)$ denotes the differential phase at time t_i (where $i = 1, 2, \dots, N$). For
 146 the m-th differential interferogram generated between time instants t_a and t_b (with $t_a > t_b$), the interference phase
 147 value corresponding to any pixel (x, r) is:

148
$$\delta\varphi_m(x, r) = \varphi(t_a, x, r) - \varphi(t_b, x, r) \approx \frac{4\pi}{\lambda} [d(t_a, x, r) - d(t_b, x, r)] \quad (2)$$

149 Where $\delta\varphi_m(x, r)$ denotes the interferometric phase of pixel (x, r) in the m-th interferogram; λ represents the
 150 wavelength of the satellite-borne radar; and $d(t_a, x, r)$ as well as $d(t_b, x, r)$ respectively stand for the cumulative
 151 line-of-sight (LOS) deformations at times t_a and t_b , with both deformations referenced to the reference time t_0 .

152 In accordance with the fundamental principles of the Small Baseline Subset Interferometric Synthetic
 153 Aperture Radar (SBAS-InSAR) technique, its standard workflow comprises six core stages, which are specifically
 154 defined as follows: data preprocessing, baseline network construction, interferogram generation, phase
 155 unwrapping, surface deformation estimation, and geocoding:

$$156 \quad v_m = \frac{\varphi_m - \varphi_{m-1}}{t_m - t_{m-1}} \quad (3)$$

157 Assuming that the deformation rate between two adjacent interferograms is denoted as v_k , k and
 158 $k-1$ represent the serial numbers of SAR images, respectively). the value of the m -th differential interferogram
 159 can be reformulated as follows:

$$160 \quad \delta\varphi_m = \sum_{k=t, m+1}^{t_A, m} (t_k - t_{k-1}) v_k \quad (4)$$

161 In other words, this value represents the integral of the deformation rate v_k over each time period
 162 corresponding to the time intervals between the master and slave SAR images. On this basis, Equation (4) can be
 163 rewritten into the following matrix form:

$$164 \quad Bv = \delta\varphi \quad (5)$$

165 Equation (5) corresponds to a matrix (denoted as B) with a dimension of $M \times N$. When there are multiple
 166 small baseline sets involved, the matrix B exhibits rank deficiency. To address this issue, the Singular Value
 167 Decomposition (SVD) method can be employed to decompose the coefficient matrix B —a process that facilitates
 168 the joint inversion of multiple small baseline sets. Accordingly, a least squares solution that achieves the
 169 minimization of the norm associated with the cumulative deformation variable can be derived. By virtue of this
 170 solution, the accurate estimation of the deformation variable is rendered feasible.

171 **Key SBAS-InSAR processing parameters implemented are as follows: Multi-looking was set to 10×2**
 172 **(azimuth \times range), with this higher azimuth multi-looking factor chosen to maximize noise reduction while**
 173 **preserving sufficient spatial resolution, specifically optimized for our dense vegetation study area. The spatial**
 174 **baseline was constrained to < 300 m and the temporal baseline to < 24 days, with these tight constraints**
 175 **implemented to minimize both spatial and temporal decorrelation effects, and additional quality control applied**
 176 **to exclude interferometric pairs with coherence below the threshold. A coherence threshold of 0.3 was used to**
 177 **exclude low-coherence pixels, with additional coherence-based quality control applied to remove poor-quality**
 178 **interferometric pairs. Phase unwrapping was performed using the SNAPHU algorithm with a cost threshold of**
 179 **0.2, selected for its robust performance in complex terrain, with additional error detection and correction**
 180 **procedures. Atmospheric phase screen (APS) correction included Gaussian filtering (500 m window) and linear**
 181 **temporal detrending, a two-step approach that effectively mitigates atmospheric phase screen effects common in**
 182 **subtropical regions. A stable reference point with a deformation rate < 0.5 cm/year was selected in the western**
 183 **low-relief area through multi-criteria analysis. A temporal Gaussian filter (window = 3) was applied to reduce**
 184 **residual noise while preserving genuine deformation signals.**

185 In addition to these core parameters, we implemented four advanced processing techniques to further
 186 improve data quality. First, we applied a homogeneous filtering method specifically designed for vegetated areas
 187 to optimize interferometric phase quality (Jiang et al., 2015). This technique effectively reduces noise while
 188 preserving coherent signals in areas with dense vegetation, significantly improving phase continuity and overall
 189 data quality. Second, we implemented an interferometric phase closure method to identify and remove unwrapping
 190 errors (Biggs et al., 2007). This quality control step systematically detects inconsistencies in phase measurements,
 191 allowing us to correct or exclude erroneous data points, thereby enhancing the reliability of our deformation results.

192 Third, to address small voids in unwrapped interferograms caused by decorrelation, we applied a spatially adaptive
193 interpolation method (Ferretti et al., 2011). This approach preserves phase continuity while filling small gaps,
194 improving the spatial density of our deformation results without compromising accuracy. Fourth, we implemented
195 phase linking (phase triangulation) to retrieve consistent wrapped phase time-series from the full stack of SAR
196 images, effectively mitigating decorrelation effects in densely vegetated areas by leveraging all possible
197 interferometric pairs (Guarnieri & Tebaldini, 2008; Mirzaee et al., 2023). This technique constructs a full complex
198 coherence matrix to estimate an optimized wrapped time series, significantly improving phase quality in regions
199 with low coherence.

200 **3.2 Data preparation**

201 **3.2.1 Landslide Inventory and modeling strategy**

202 The historical landslide data used in this study are mainly obtained from the local geological disaster survey
203 reports, field surveys, and remote sensing image interpretation. A total of 368 historical shallow landslide points
204 were collected (as shown in Fig.1), including the location, scale, and occurrence time of the landslides. An equal
205 number of non-landslide samples were selected randomly from the “relatively stable” area. A k-fold cross-
206 validation approach (with k set to 5 in the present study) was employed to elaborate on the models’ capability in
207 classifying independent test data. Specifically, the data were randomly divided into k mutually exclusive subsets;
208 in each iteration, one subset was utilized for model testing, whereas the remaining k-1 subsets were combined and
209 used for model training (James et al., 2013).

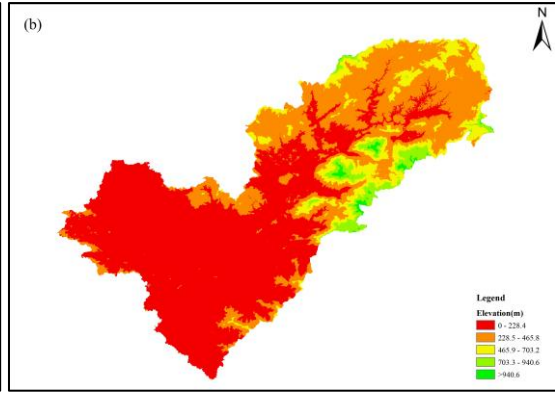
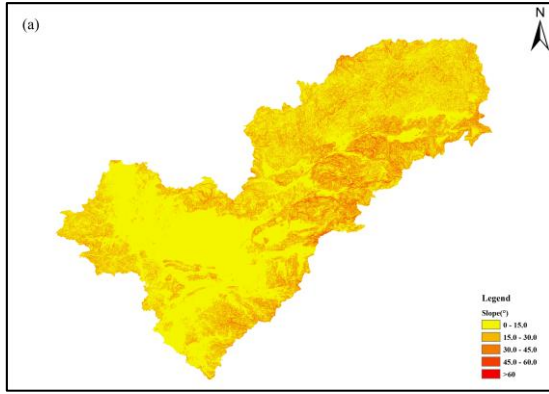
210 **3.2.2 Conditioning factors and mapping unit**

211 The conditioning factors selected in the study consisted of static and dynamic factors. Static factors included slope,
212 aspect, elevation, curvature, distance to faults (DTF), distance to streams (DTS), distance to roads (DTR), and
213 NDVI (Fig.4). Dynamic factors included cumulative deformation and deformation rate (Fig.5). The specific
214 indexes and their classification standards are shown in Table 3.

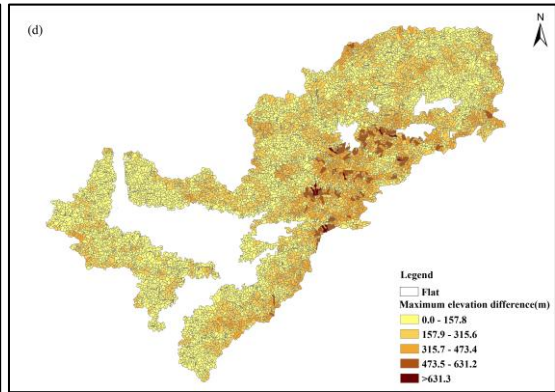
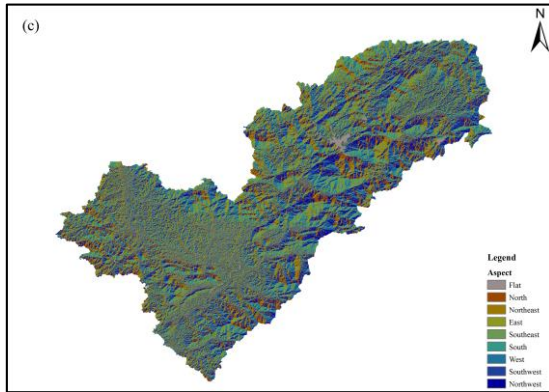
215 Prior to LSA, a suitable mapping unit must first be determined. Grid cells and slope units are two of the most
216 widely used mapping units, and a detailed comparison of the two can be found in other relevant literature (Lie et
217 al.,2024; Liu et al.,2024). In terms of preserving topographic conditions and distinguishing landslide locations, slope
218 units exhibit superior performance. Accordingly, slope units were adopted as the mapping unit, and the study area
219 was divided into 10426 units. And the mean value in the unit was counted as the representative value of the unit.

220 The study utilized ArcGIS 10.7 for the processing of thematic map generation, unit division, and data analysis,
221 including reclassification, distance analysis, and regional analysis etc.

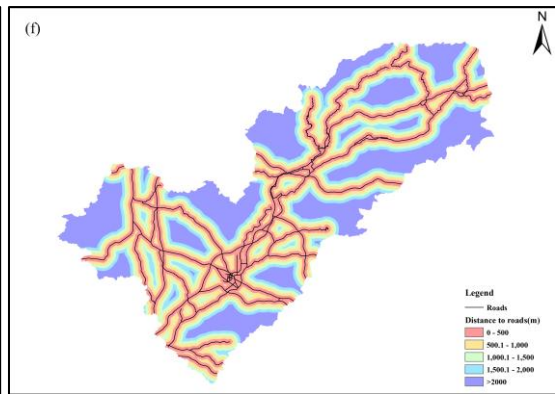
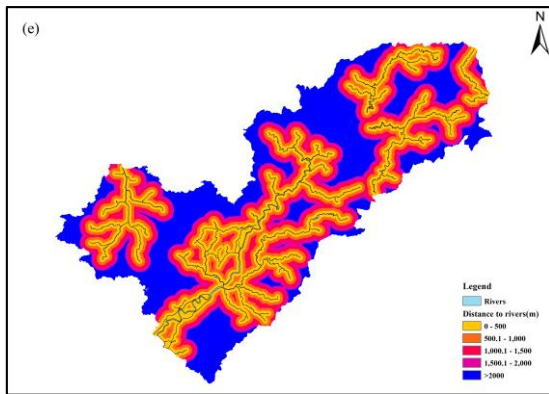
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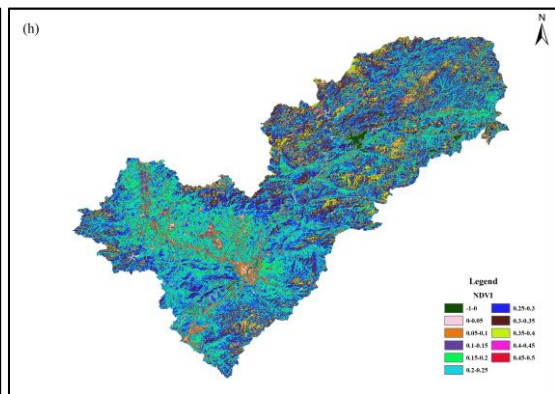
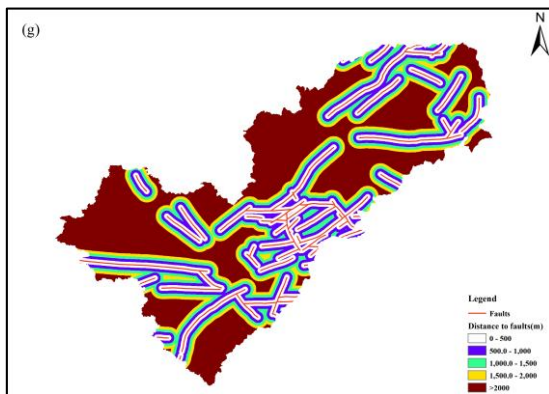
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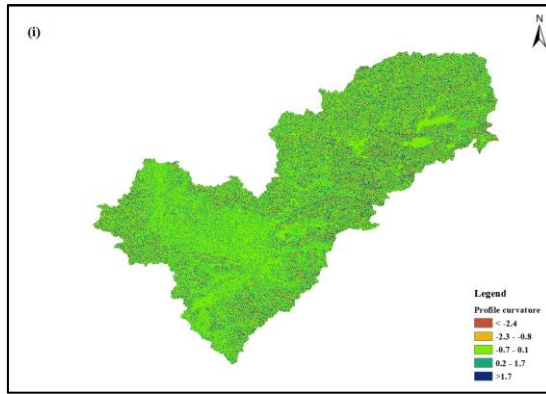


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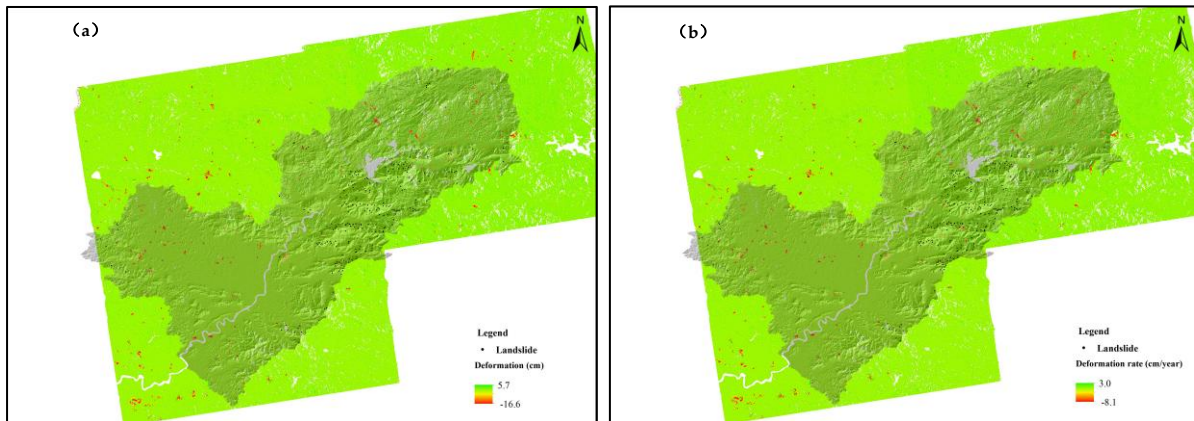


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Figure 4: Thematic map of static factors:(a) Slope; (b) Elevation; (c) Aspect; (d) Maximum elevation difference; (e) DTS; (f) DTR; (g) DTF; (h) NDVI; (i) Profile curvature.



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Figure 5: Thematic map of dynamic factors: (a) Deformation; (b) Deformation rate.

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Table 3. Shallow landslide susceptibility conditioning factors and classification standards

Category	Conditioning factors	Zone
Static factors	Slope ($^{\circ}$)	0~15
		15~30
		30~45
		45~60
		>60
	Aspect	Flat
		North
		East
		Northeast
		Southeast
		South
	Elevation(m)	Southwest
		West
		0~228.4
		228.5~465.8
		465.9~703.2

		703.3~940.6
		>940.6
	DTF(m)	0~500
		500~1000
		1000~1500
		1500~2000
		>2000
	DTS(m)	0~500
		500~1000
		1000~1500
		1500~2000
		>2000
	DTR(m)	0~500
		500~1000
		1000~1500
		1500~2000
		>2000
	Profile curvature	<-2.4
		-2.3~-0.8
		-0.7~1
		0.1~1.7
		>1.7
Maximum elevation difference(m)	0~157.8	
	157.9~315.6	
	315.7~473.4	
	473.5~631.2	
	>631.3	
NDVI	-1~0.5	
Dynamic factors	Cumulative deformation (cm)	-16.6~5.7
	Deformation rate (cm/y)	-8.1~3.0

232 3.3 Modeling

233 3.3.1 RF

234 The Random Forest (RF) algorithm, an ensemble learning method composed of multiple tree-based classifiers,
235 has gained widespread recognition and application in LSA (Li et al.,2024) . During the model training phase, K
236 sample subsets are generated from the original training dataset through the bootstrap sampling technique. The
237 samples that are not included in these subsets, known as out - of - bag (OOB) data, serve as a valuable resource

238 for internal error assessment of the model. Each of these K sample subsets is used to train an individual decision
239 tree, which acts as a base learner, resulting in K distinct classification outcomes (Breiman et al.,2001). For the final
240 classification result, a voting mechanism is adopted instead of a simple weighting approach—each decision tree's
241 classification result is treated as a vote, and the category that receives the majority of votes is determined as the
242 ultimate prediction of the RF model. A key advantage of the RF algorithm is its inherent ability to mitigate over-
243 fitting.

244 **3.3.2 LGBM**

245 The Light Gradient Boosting Machine (LGBM) stands out as a high-efficiency, tree-structured gradient boosting
246 algorithm (Ke et al.,2017). Distinguishing itself from conventional approaches, it adopts a leaf-wise tree growth
247 mechanism with restricted depth, replacing the traditional level-wise strategy—an innovation that simultaneously
248 mitigates overfitting and enhances predictive accuracy. The core of the leaf-wise method lies in prioritizing the
249 leaf node with the maximum gain for splitting at each iteration. In comparison to the level-wise strategy, which
250 expands all nodes at a given depth uniformly, the leaf-wise approach minimizes more of the errors associated with
251 level-wise growth when the total number of splits is identical. Additionally, it reduces redundant computations
252 involving leaf nodes with low gain, thereby guaranteeing the model's computational efficiency without
253 compromising its accuracy.

254 **3.3.3 XGBoost**

255 XGBoost, a robust machine learning framework designed to enhance the scalability of tree-based boosting
256 algorithms, has emerged as a leading and widely adopted method in recent years across various research and
257 application domains (Chen et al.,2015; Zhang e et al.,2023). By leveraging gradient descent optimization to minimize
258 the predefined loss function, the algorithm constructs a predictive model through an ensemble of weak
259 classification trees within a boosting framework. The core idea lies in fitting well the residual of the previous
260 prediction by learning a new function in each iteration; on this basis, it further calculates the score corresponding
261 to each node in accordance with the sample characteristics.

262 In this study, three machine learning algorithms were employed to model the two scenarios (static factor only
263 and dynamic-static factors coupling) separately, resulting in a total of six models.

264 **3.3.4 Hyperparameter Optimization and Settings**

265 Hyperparameter optimization plays a crucial role in enhancing the performance of machine learning models,
266 as it seeks to determine the optimal hyperparameter combinations based on predefined evaluation metrics (Karl
267 et al., 2023). Common strategies for hyperparameter tuning include grid search, random search, and Bayesian
268 optimization (Agrawal et al., 2021). In this study, grid search coupled with 5-fold cross-validation was
269 implemented on the training dataset to optimize hyperparameters. This strategy efficiently explores the
270 hyperparameter space and reduces the risk of overfitting. The final optimized hyperparameters for each model are
271 shown in Table 4.

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Table 4. Hyperparameters of machine learning

Model	Hyperparameters
RF	n_estimators = 200, max_depth = 12, min_samples_split = 5, min_samples_leaf = 2
LGBM	learning_rate = 0.05, n_estimators = 300, max_depth = 10, num_leaves = 31, subsample = 0.8
XGBoost	learning_rate = 0.05, n_estimators = 300, max_depth = 8, subsample = 0.8, colsample_bytree = 0.8, gamma = 0.1

276 3.4 Verification and comparison

277 The ROC curve is a conventional method for validating the outcomes of LSA. The area under the ROC curve
 278 (AUC, ranging from 0~1) is used to quantify the predictive accuracy of the assessment (Hodasová et al.,2021; Liang
 279 et al.,2021; Liang et al.,2023).

280 The landslide susceptibility map (LSM) was reclassified into five levels as very low(0-0.2), Low(0.2-0.4),
 281 moderate(0.4-0.6), high(0.6-0.8), very high (0.8-1). To verify the reliability of the susceptibility map, historical
 282 landslide points and the size distribution of areas for each susceptibility level were applied (Liang et al.,2021).

283 The AUC, sensitivity, specificity, and LSM were applied to verify and compare the effectiveness of different
 284 models in the study.

285 4. Results

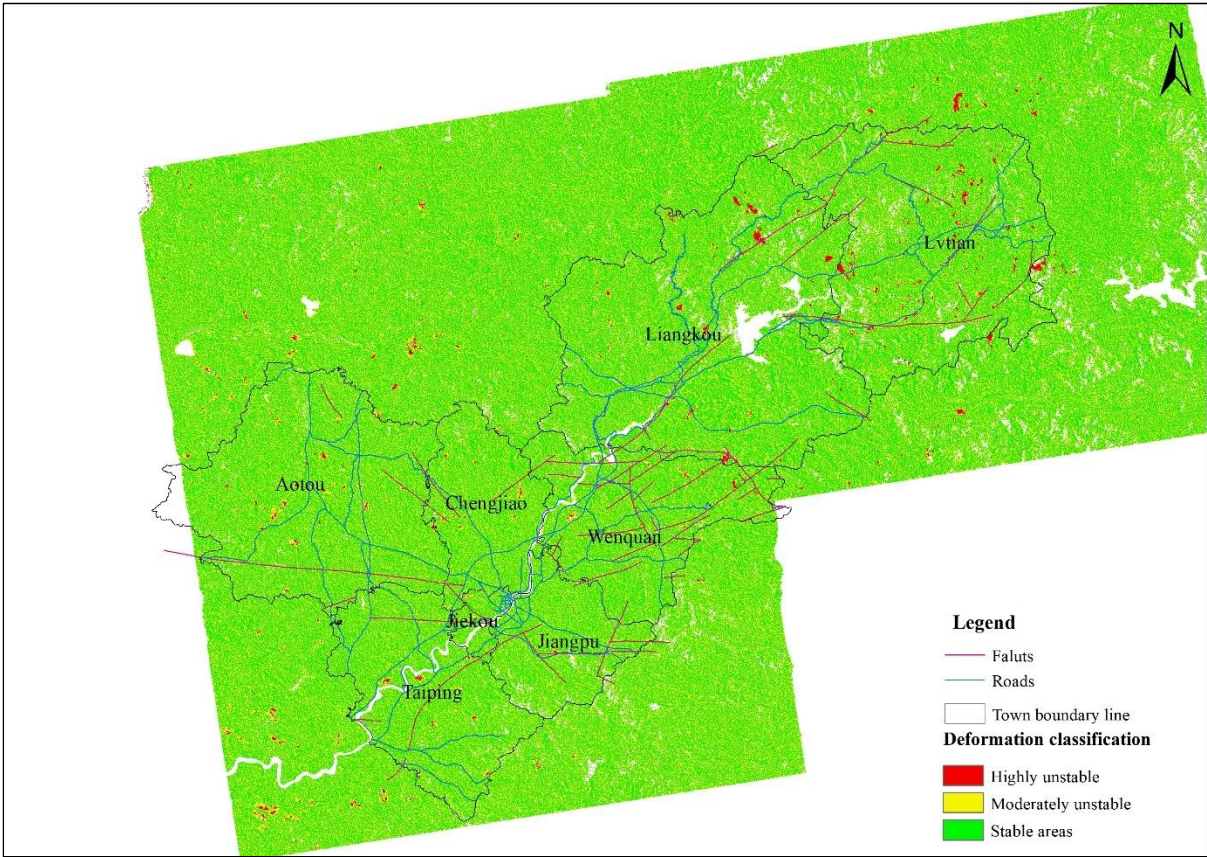
286 4.1 Surface Deformation Results from SBAS - InSAR

287 Using the SBAS - InSAR method, we obtained the average annual surface deformation rate map of the study area
 288 from January 2024 to December 2025. The results show that the surface deformation in the study area is spatially
 289 heterogeneous, with deformation rates ranging from -8.1cm/year (subsidence) to 3 cm/year (uplift). Most areas
 290 have stable surface conditions (deformation rate < 2cm/year, the green area in Fig.6), accounting for
 291 approximately 75% of the total study area. The moderately unstable areas (deformation rate: -1 to -2 cm/year, the
 292 yellow area in Fig.6) account for 20%, while the highly unstable areas (-2 to -8 cm/year, the red area in Fig.4)
 293 account for 5%.

294 The highly unstable areas are mainly distributed in the following locations:

- 295 1. It mainly focuses on the areas of Lvian Town, the northern part of Liangkou Town, and the northern part
 296 of Wenquan Town.
- 297 2. Along the roads, where road construction has disturbed the slope stability, leading to obvious **deformation**.
- 298 3. Near the fault zones in the eastern part of the study area, where the geological structure is unstable, leading
 299 to continuous **deformation**.

300 These highly unstable areas are consistent with the field investigation (Fig.7), indicating that the InSAR-
 301 derived surface deformation data can effectively identify potential shallow landslide risk areas. Besides, the
 302 majority of these potential geohazard risks are closely associated with human engineering activities—including
 303 road construction, residential development, and industrial facility construction—and such hazards typically
 304 exhibit a small spatial scale.



305

306 **Figure 6: Surface Deformation Rate Map of the Study Area.**



307

308

309 **Figure 7: Field investigation:(a) slope collapse on 2025.6.17;(b) slope collapse on 2025.6.18 ;(c) landslide on 2025.8.20;(d)**
 310 **landslide on 2025.8.20.**

311 **4.2 Model's Performance**

312 The performance of the models was evaluated using confusion matrices, with the detailed results presented in
 313 Table 5~6 and Fig.8. For the training dataset, the SAR+XGBoost model achieved the highest sensitivity (0.899),
 314 specificity (0.895), accuracy (0.897), and AUC (0.951), followed by the SAR+LGBM model with the values of
 315 0.872, 0.874, 0.873, and 0.937. The RF model performed the worst with the values of 0.821, 0.830, 0.825, and
 316 0.894. While the performance of the LGBM model is average, with the values of 0.851, 0.833, 0.842, and 0.913.
 317 The AUC values of all models were all close to 0.9. Among them, the SAR + XGBoost model achieved 0.951,
 318 which indicates that the model has achieved an excellent effect in predicting landslide susceptibility. After the
 319 integration based on SAR technology, the overall prediction accuracy of the model has improved to a certain
 320 extent.

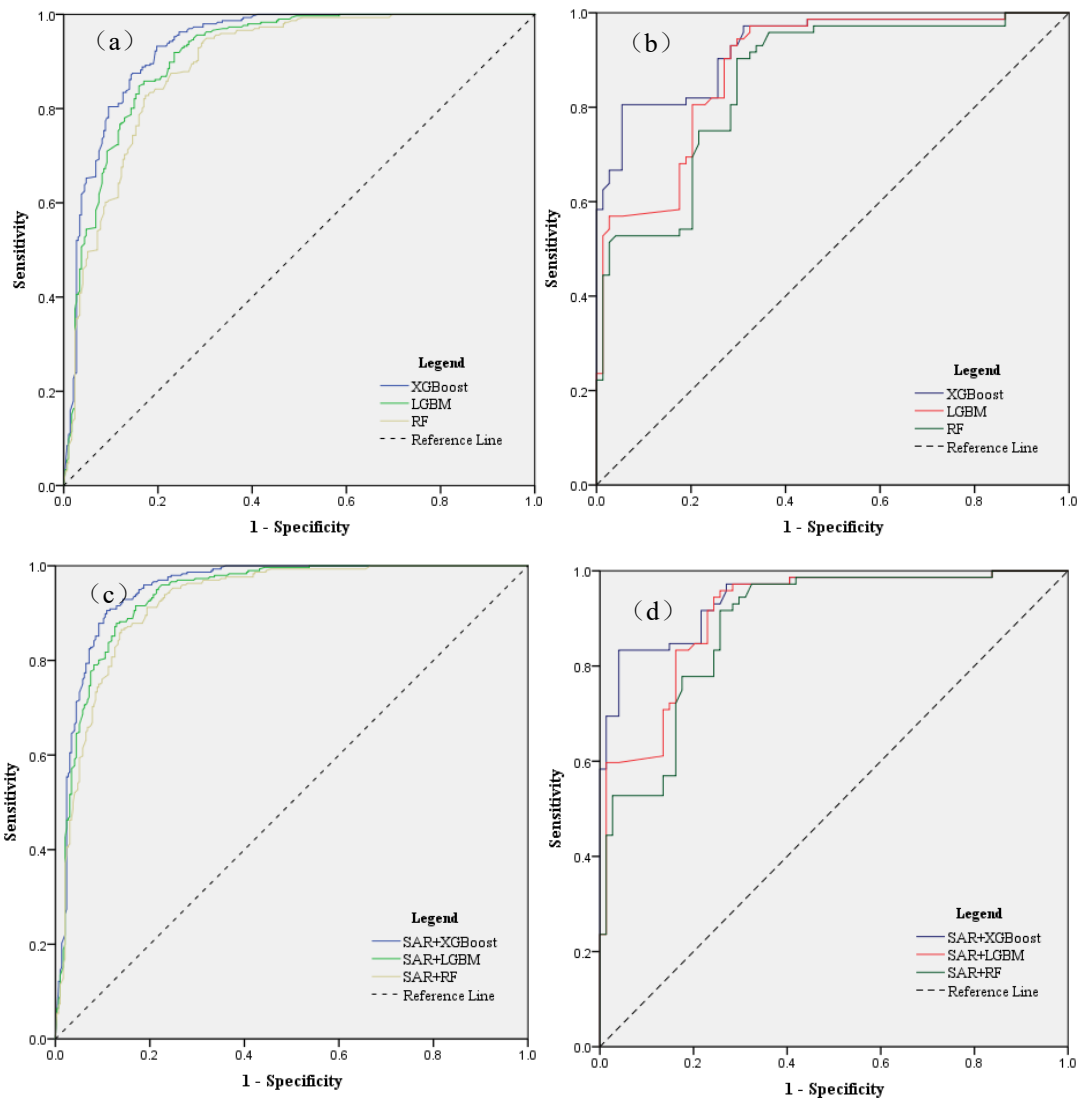
321 **Table 5. Models' performance in training**

Indexs	XGBoost	LGBM	RF	SAR+XGBoost	SAR+LGBM	SAR+RF
TP	1305	1260	1215	1330	1290	1270
TN	1230	1225	1220	1315	1285	1270
FP	240	245	250	155	185	200
FN	175	220	265	150	190	210
Sensitivity	0.882	0.851	0.821	0.899	0.872	0.858
Specificity	0.837	0.833	0.830	0.895	0.874	0.864
Accuracy	0.859	0.842	0.825	0.897	0.873	0.861
AUC	0.933	0.913	0.894	0.951	0.937	0.924

322 In terms of validation, the SAR+XGBoost model also outperformed the others, reaching 0.847, 0.838, 0.842,
 323 and 0.939, whereas the XGBoost obtained 0.819, 0.811, 0.815, and 0.928. The RF model also performed the worst
 324 with the values of 0.750, 0.784, 0.767, and 0.855. While the performance of the LGBM model is average, with
 325 the values of 0.806, 0.797, 0.801, and 0.886. Compared with the training set, the performance of all models has
 326 declined to varying degrees, and the AUC value of the RF model has dropped below 0.855 but improved to 0.886
 327 after merging SAR technology. After the integration based on SAR technology, the overall prediction accuracy
 328 of the model has improved to a certain extent.

329 **Table 6. Models' performance in validation**

Indexs	XGBoost	LGBM	RF	SAR+XGBoost	SAR+LGBM	SAR+RF
TP	295	290	270	305	300	280
TN	300	295	290	310	305	300
FP	70	75	80	60	65	70
FN	65	70	90	55	60	80
Sensitivity	0.819	0.806	0.750	0.847	0.833	0.778
Specificity	0.811	0.797	0.784	0.838	0.824	0.811
Accuracy	0.815	0.801	0.767	0.842	0.829	0.795
AUC	0.928	0.886	0.855	0.944	0.910	0.886



330

331

332 **Figure 8: Analysis of ROC curve: (a) traditional machine learning models in the training dataset; (b) traditional**
 333 **machine learning models in the validation dataset; (c) SAR merged models in the training dataset; (d) SAR merged**
 334 **models in the validation dataset.**

335 4.3 Landslide Susceptibility Map

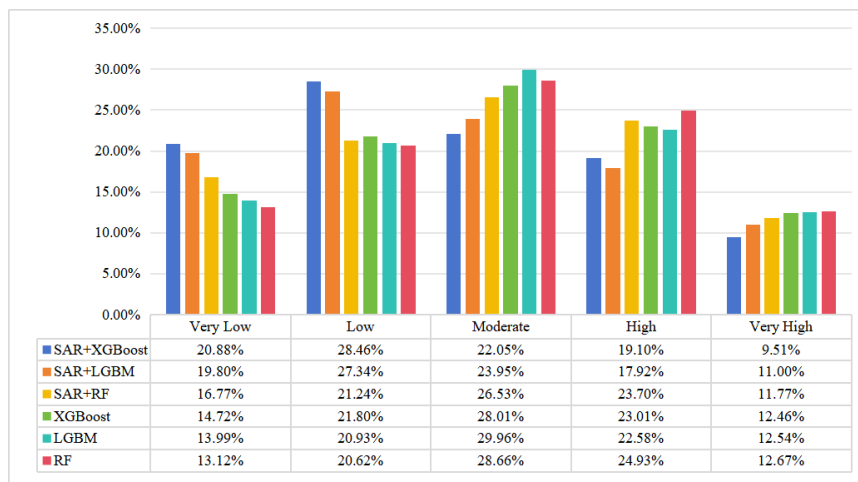
336 After model training and validation, the landslide susceptibility index (LSI) of each slope unit was calculated, and
 337 the landslide susceptibility map of the whole study area was generated. The statistical results of the susceptibility
 338 levels are shown in Fig.9. A logically sound landslide susceptibility map must adhere to two fundamental criteria:
 339 (1) the density of landslide samples should exhibit a positive correlation with increasing susceptibility classes,
 340 with the majority of landslide samples concentrated in the highest susceptibility zone; (2) the map should display
 341 spatial continuity and smoothness, with the very high-susceptibility class occupying a relatively small proportion
 342 of the total study area (Ado et al.,2022).

343 The traditional machine learning models consistently predict a relatively high proportion of moderately
 344 susceptible areas, with all models yielding values exceeding 28%. In particular, the LGBM model achieved a rate
 345 of approximately 30%. For the SAR+XGBoost model, the distribution of predicted susceptibility classes was:
 346 20.88% (very low), 28.46% (low), 22.05% (moderate), 19.10% (high), and 9.51% (very high). While the XGBoost

347 model occupied 14.72% (very low), 21.80% (low), 28.01% (moderate), 23.01% (high), and 12.46(very high),
 348 respectively. The RF model occupied 13.12% (very low), 20.62% (low), 28.66% (moderate), 25.83(high), and
 349 11.77(very high), respectively. While the SAR+RF model occupied 16.77% (very low), 21.24% (low), 26.53%
 350 (moderate), 23.70%(high), and 11.77% (very high), respectively.

351 As illustrated in Fig.10, the landslide samples (represented by dark spots) are predominantly distributed in
 352 the red-colored regions (corresponding to high/very high susceptibility), while a few samples are scattered
 353 improperly in the green area (corresponding to low/very low susceptibility). Furthermore, the high and very high
 354 susceptibility zones are spatially concentrated in the eastern region, which is consistent with the actual spatial
 355 distribution of historical landslides. This subregion is characterized by steep slopes (slope>30°) with substantial
 356 elevation differences (MED>300), close proximity to the adjacent road network (DTR<500), and a nearby
 357 distribution of geological faults. The low and very low susceptibility zones are spatially concentrated in the
 358 western region. This region is characterized by relatively gentle terrain with minimal elevation variations and a
 359 sparse distribution of faults. Collectively, these observations demonstrate that the susceptibility maps generated
 360 by the 6 models are generally logically consistent and reliable, but there are certain differences. Furthermore, as
 361 illustrated in Fig.11, the high-deformation zones identified via SAR remote sensing do not fully overlap with the
 362 high-susceptibility areas delineated by the model; correspondingly, the stable zones detected by SAR technology
 363 also exhibit incomplete spatial overlap with the low-susceptibility areas. The highly unstable area is located in the
 364 plain area of the residential zone. **The mismatch between high-deformation zones and high-susceptibility areas
 365 can be primarily attributed to different deformation mechanisms in distinct geomorphological settings. The highly
 366 unstable areas distributed in residential plains are dominated by anthropogenic vertical subsidence related to
 367 groundwater extraction and urban consolidation, rather than slope movements associated with landslides.**

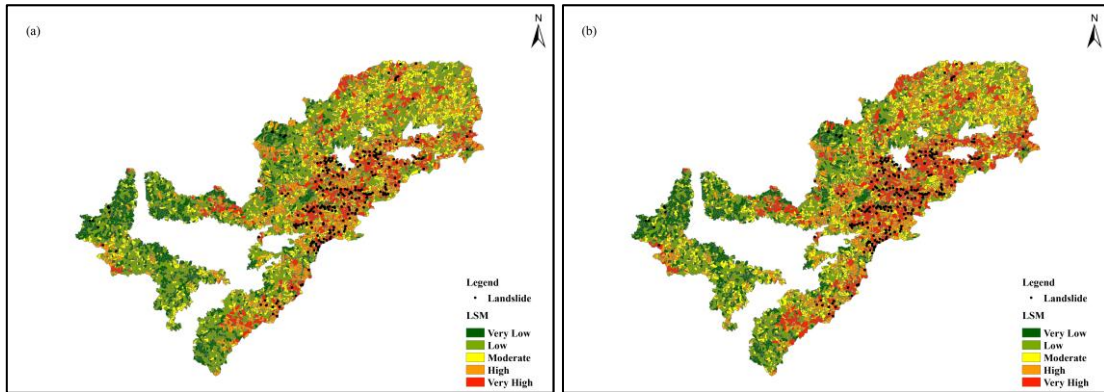
368 Besides, to characterize the spatiotemporal evolution of slope deformation, a time-series deformation
 369 analysis was conducted based on quarterly SBAS-InSAR results from January 2024 to September 2025(Fig.12).
 370 Furthermore, monitoring points were selected from different levels of susceptibility areas for monthly deformation
 371 analysis (Fig.13). It can be observed that the deformation in the high/very high susceptibility areas occurs mainly
 372 from April to September each year, which coincides with the flood season in terms of time. While the low/very
 373 low susceptibility areas were basically stable. Slopes that eventually failed exhibited accelerated deformation
 374 during or immediately after heavy rainfall periods, while stable slopes maintained relatively low and steady
 375 deformation rates throughout the monitoring period.



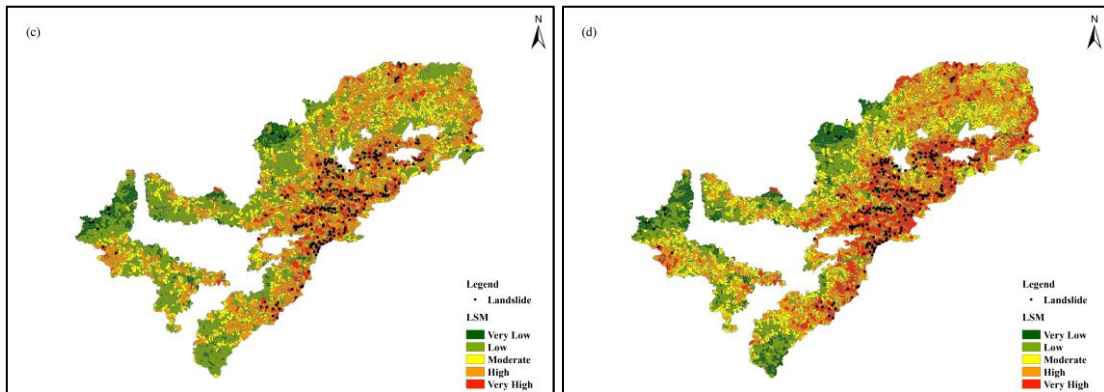
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377 **Figure 9: Percentages of areas in LSM.**

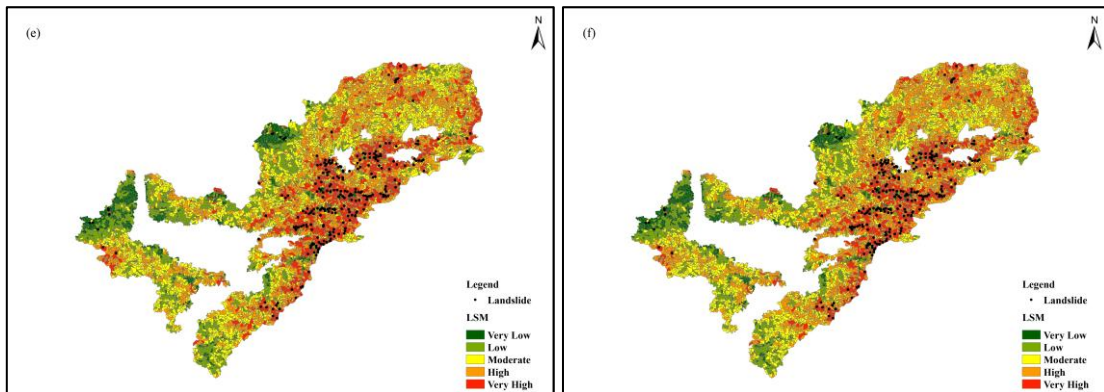
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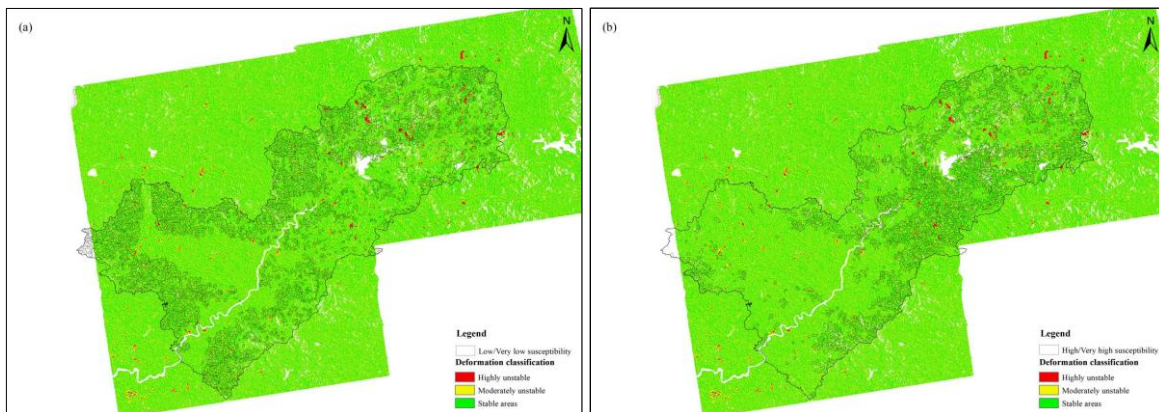


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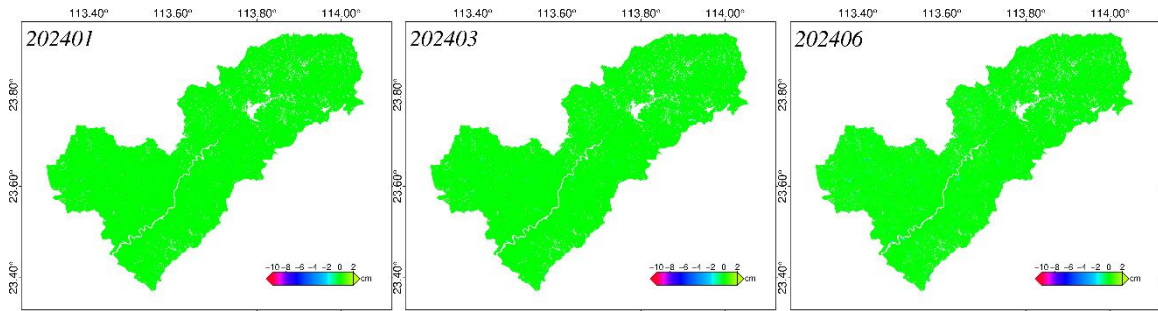
381 **Figure 10: LSM produced by: (a) SAR+XGBoost; (b) SAR+LGBM; (c) SAR+RF; (d) XGBoost; (e) LGBM; (f) RF.**

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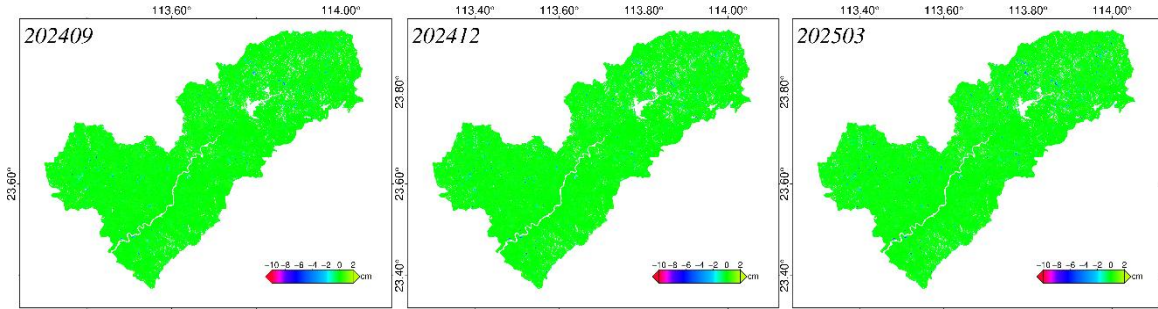


383 **Figure 11: LSM produced by SAR+XGBoost: (a) Low/very low susceptibility; (b) High/very high susceptibility.**

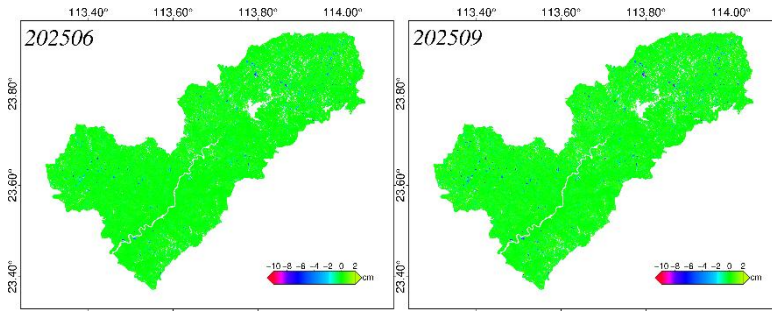
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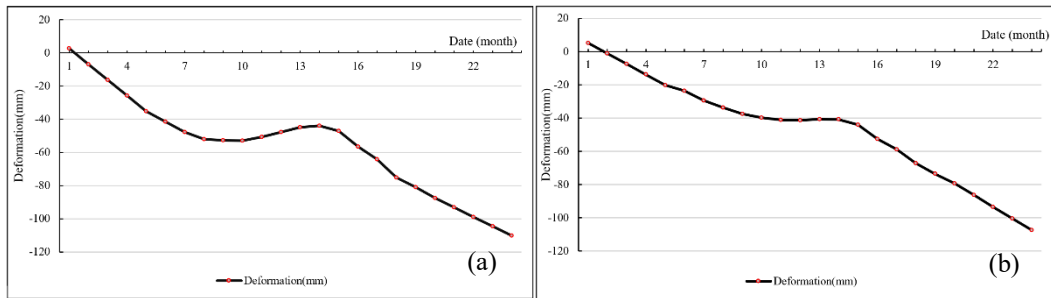
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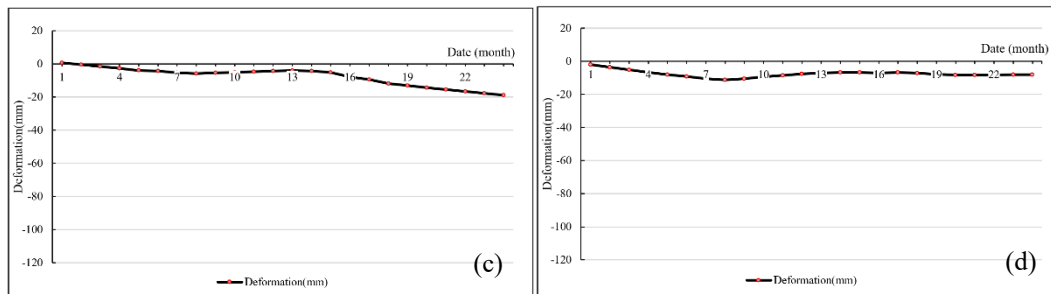
387

Figure 12: Maps of Temporal deformation (2024.1~2025.9).

388



389



390

Figure 13: Maps of Temporal deformation for specific areas: (a-b) High/very high susceptibility areas; (c-d) Low/very low susceptibility areas.

391

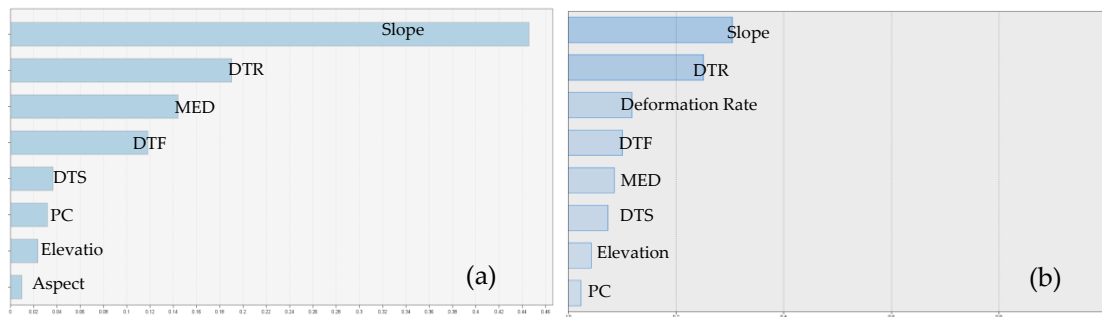
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393

394 **4.4 Analysis of the Importance of Conditioning Factors**

395 To quantify the critical contribution of dynamic factors to landslide susceptibility prediction, the Gini index—an
 396 indicator that measures the correlation between predictive variables and model outputs—was employed in this
 397 study, and the results were normalized (Dou et al.,2023; Ye et al.,2022). In the static factor analysis, the key
 398 contributing variables were identified as the slope, DTR, MED, and DTF, with these factors exhibiting relatively
 399 high weight coefficients of 0.45, 0.19, 0.14, and 0.12, respectively (Fig.12; Table 7). By contrast, DTS, PC,
 400 elevation, and aspect yielded lower weight coefficients, indicating that these factors exert a relatively minor
 401 influence on landslide occurrence.

402 After coupling with SAR technology, the key contributing variables were identified as the slope, DTR,
 403 Deformation rate (DR), and DTF, with these factors exhibiting relatively high weight coefficients of 0.3, 0.25,
 404 0.12, and 0.1, respectively (Fig.12; Table 8). By contrast, MED, DTS, elevation, and PC yielded lower weight
 405 coefficients, indicating that these factors exert a relatively minor influence on landslide occurrence.



406
 407 **Figure 14: Factor Importance Analysis: (a) Static factor analysis; (b) Dynamic and static factor coupling analysis.**

408 **Table 7 Static Factor Importance Analysis**

Factors	Slope	DTR	MED	DTF	DTS	PC	Elevation	Aspect
Gini	0.45	0.19	0.14	0.12	0.04	0.03	0.02	0.01

409 **Table 8 Dynamic and static factor Importance Analysis**

Factors	Slope	DTR	DR	DTF	MED	DTS	Elevation	PC
Gini	0.3	0.25	0.12	0.1	0.09	0.07	0.04	0.02

410 **5. Discussion**

411 **5.1 Models' comparison**

412 Different algorithms exhibit distinct focuses and design priorities, and their performance typically varies
 413 depending on the specific research context, characteristics of the study area, and quality of input samples (Hussin
 414 et al.,2016; Lai et al.,2019; Yilmaz et al.,2010). With the advancement of related technologies and the maturation of
 415 theoretical frameworks, a variety of advanced algorithms—such as convolutional neural networks (CNNs)—have
 416 been developed and increasingly applied to landslide susceptibility mapping (LSM) (Wang et al.,2019; Zhao et
 417 al.,2024). These algorithmic advancements aim to enhance the prediction accuracy and reliability of LSM results.
 418 The three algorithms adopted in this study are all tree-based ensemble algorithms. Regarding accuracy, the
 419 performance of the three algorithms was similar throughout the training and validation stages. Overall, the

420 integration of SAR technology contributed to a measurable improvement in the general prediction accuracy of the
421 models. Tree-based ensemble algorithms are capable of efficiently learning discriminative features from SAR-
422 derived ground deformation interpretation data, illustrating the utility of incorporating this remote sensing
423 technology to enhance the generalization capability of landslide susceptibility assessment models.

424 For LSM, the six models yield generally consistent predictions of the overall susceptibility spatial trends.
425 However, traditional machine learning methods tend to delineate a larger proportion of the study area as
426 moderately susceptible zones, which increases the uncertainty of the prediction results. Models integrated with
427 SAR technology exhibit a reduced proportion of high/very high landslide susceptibility areas, accompanied by a
428 corresponding increase in the proportion of low and very low susceptibility areas.

429 **5.2 Contribution of InSAR-Derived Deformation Data to Susceptibility Assessment**

430 In this study, ground deformation is treated as a dynamic influencing factor and incorporated into the
431 comprehensive evaluation framework for landslide susceptibility. Compared with models that solely incorporate
432 static factors, the algorithms integrated with SAR technology not only achieve improved prediction accuracy but
433 also yield more rational spatial distribution patterns across different landslide susceptibility classes (Hua et al.,2021;
434 Lamichhane et al.,2025). Through the analysis of the importance of the conditioning factors, deformation rate was
435 essential (Devara et al.,2021).

436 Most prior studies rely on detailed landslide inventories, operating under the implicit assumption that the
437 spatiotemporal patterns of future landslides will be consistent with historical and contemporary observations
438 (Steger et al.,2017; Huang et al.,2024; Zhi et al.,2023). However, intensive human activities and sustained rainfall
439 events frequently induce novel landslide patterns, thereby challenging the validity of this fundamental premise.
440 The deployment of landslide monitoring equipment is not only associated with substantial economic costs but
441 also faces challenges in providing effective early warning for sudden-onset geohazards. Notably, in southern
442 China, slope cutting activities associated with rural residential construction and road development are widespread,
443 and geological hazards are characterized by high frequency, extensive spatial distribution, and predominantly
444 small scales, rendering comprehensive coverage by monitoring systems technically infeasible and economically
445 impractical (Casagli et al.,2023).

446 Static landslide susceptibility assessment models tend to overestimate the stability of slopes that have been
447 engineered for stabilization, while underestimating the instability of slopes disturbed by anthropogenic activities
448 (Singh et al.,2010). Furthermore, the calibration of static landslide susceptibility assessment models must be
449 updated in tandem with the refinement and expansion of landslide inventories. However, the refinement and
450 expansion of landslide inventories are both financially costly and logistically infrequent. Consequently, the
451 absence of timely updated landslide inventories readily leads to the underestimation of emerging landslide patterns
452 triggered by urban expansion or shifts in meteorological event regimes.

453 Compared with traditional assessment methods that ignore dynamic deformation information, the integration
454 of InSAR data provides two key improvements. 1. **Early Identification of disasters**: Traditional methods mainly
455 rely on static factors (e.g., lithology, slope) to identify high-risk areas, but these factors cannot reflect the dynamic
456 changes in slope stability. The InSAR-derived deformation data can capture subtle subsidence (e.g., -5 to -10
457 mm/year) that is imperceptible to field surveys, enabling early identification of slopes in the "pre-landslide" stage;
458 2. **Improvement of Assessment Accuracy**: **The validation results show that the overall accuracy of the**

459 susceptibility map is roughly a 5 percentage-point improvement compared to the traditional static assessment
460 methods. This significant improvement confirms that InSAR data effectively fills the gap of dynamic information
461 in traditional assessments (Chen et al.,2023).

462 However, the high- and low-deformation zones identified via SAR remote sensing do not precisely
463 correspond to the high- and low-susceptibility areas predicted by the landslide susceptibility model. SBAS -
464 InSAR also has limitations. For example, in areas with extremely high vegetation coverage (e.g., dense primeval
465 forests), the coherence of SAR images is still low, leading to missing deformation data. Conversely, geological
466 hazard occurrences exhibit inherent spatiotemporal randomness, while the current SAR remote sensing systems
467 are constrained by finite spatiotemporal resolution. Therefore, the evaluation of landslide susceptibility should
468 incorporate both static and dynamic factors.

469 In this study, only Sentinel 1 ascending-orbit data were used, and the derived deformation results represent
470 the projection of real 3D surface displacement onto the radar line-of-sight (LOS), which has inherent limitations
471 in discriminating different deformation types (Hu et al., 2014). Both ascending and descending Sentinel-1 data
472 are freely available over the study area, providing favorable conditions for 3D displacement decomposition in
473 future work. Combining ascending and descending observations can effectively separate horizontal and vertical
474 displacement components, which helps distinguish landslide-related slope movements from anthropogenic
475 subsidence (e.g., groundwater extraction and soil consolidation) (Fuhrmann & Garthwaite, 2019). The
476 decomposed components with clearer physical meaning can also serve as more discriminative factors for machine
477 learning models to reduce misclassification (Xiong & Zhu, 2026). Although 3D deformation decomposition is
478 beyond the scope of this study, it will be an important direction for improving the proposed dynamic assessment
479 framework in future research.

480 6. Conclusions

481 A high-quality landslide susceptibility map provides clear guidance for local disaster prevention and mitigation
482 work. This study systematically explored the application of SBAS-InSAR in small-scale landslide susceptibility
483 dynamic assessment, using tree-based ensemble algorithms and the Conghua district as the study area. The main
484 conclusions are as follows:

485 1. The SBAS-InSAR technique enables the effective capture of spatiotemporal dynamic surface deformation
486 information, which is of considerable significance for the identification and monitoring of small-scale landslide
487 hazards in the southern China region.

488 2. Following the integration of deformation-derived dynamic factors, LSA based on the tree-based algorithm
489 has achieved significant improvements in prediction accuracy and reliability—demonstrating the applicability of
490 fusing SAR-derived deformation data with machine learning algorithms for dynamic landslide risk evaluation.

491 However, there are some limitations of the Study:

492 1. Diverse SAR technologies (e.g., SBAS-InSAR, PS-InSAR, TomoSAR) operating on identical SAR
493 imagery exploit different scattering characteristics—permanent scatterers, distributed scatterers, and layover
494 components—each with distinct applicability and limitations. Combined use of these methods can compensate
495 for each other's shortcomings and yield more complete and accurate deformation results, which can be further
496 incorporated into the LSA framework.

497 2. The integrated technology requires rigorous validation through multiple heterogeneous algorithms and

498 cross-validation across distinct geomorphological study areas with varying geological.
499 **3. More timely and dynamic monitoring indicators should be included in the assessment.**

500 **Data availability**

501 The data used to support the findings of this study are included within the article.

502 **Author Contributions**

503 Z.L., writing—original draft, methodology, and software; W.P., W.L. and H.H., review and validation; J.H. and
504 K.L., reviewing and editing. K.J. and G.L. are responsible for the review and validation. All authors have read
505 and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

506 **Competing interests**

507 The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

508 **Financial support**

509 This work was supported by the Key Science and Technology Program of the Ministry of Emergency Management
510 of China under Grant no. 2024EMST050502. Last but not least, many thanks for the support of Academic
511 Specialty Group for Urban Sensing in Chinese Society of Urban Planning.

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